

EXCISE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

JUN 11 2 51 PM 1974

TO : Department of State

EO 11652: HGDS 2

TAGS: PINS, GT

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: June 21, 1974

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: Monthly Report of Incidents, May 1974

REF

SUMMARY: Violence at a May Day parade in Guatemala City marked the first time in twelve years that a Guatemalan Government has resorted to the use of firearms to control a public demonstration. What began as a peaceful celebration of international labor day ended as a melee between marchers and police which left three dead and at least 18 wounded. Violence directed against the Christian Democrats continued this month, in bombing attacks against the party headquarters and the homes of two national leaders on May 8 and in the assassination of a regional party leader in Cobán on May 31. Unexplained incidents during May included the kidnapping of a crime reporter, Werner Trejo, and the assassination of a former departmental chief of the Treasury Police. The May total of 71 incidents of a possible political nature was the second highest monthly total during the past year and a half, surpassed only by the pre-election month of February (77). Not counted in the monthly total were two more Death Squad executions, bringing to some 26 the clandestine group's toll since February. END SUMMARY.

I. Statistics: The May total of 71 incidents of a probable political nature was the second highest monthly total during the past year and a half, surpassed in that period only by the pre-election month of February (77). Forty-three of the May incidents were assassinations, the highest monthly assassination total since October 1972. Ten of those killed had reported signs of torture. Four persons were kidnapped this month, a relatively low

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FORM DS-323

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY Eag DATE 20 Oct 1981
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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figure. The press attributed 9 incidents (13%) to Government security forces, while two incidents (3%), propaganda bomb explosions in Jalapa and in Santo Domingo Suchitepequez, apparently were the work of leftist subversive groups. The remaining 60 incidents (84%) were not readily attributable. Victims this month included a DCG leader in Cobán, two DCG members in Puerto Barrios, a military commissioner, a reporter, six campesinos, three laborers, a finca administrator and a student. The South Coast had by far the highest number of incidents (33), with a large number (16) concentrated, as usual, in the coastal areas of San Marcos and Quezaltenango. The level of violence also was high in Retalhuleu (8) and Izabal (7).

II. May Day Violence: The violence which erupted during the May Day labor parade (described in full in Guatemala A-071) marked the first time since the anti-Ydigoras disorders of April 1962 that a Guatemalan Government has resorted to the use of firearms in order to control a public demonstration. The parade, which was organized by the National Council for Trade Union Consultation (CNCS), representing the majority of Guatemala's trade union movement, began as a peaceful march of up to 10,000, carrying banners protesting the high cost of living and other woes affecting workers. Trouble began when the parade reached the corner of 18th Street and 6th Avenue in Zone 1, where it was supposed to turn south toward the Municipality Building. A 100-person delegation from the Municipality, headed by Mayor Manuel Colom Arqueta and leaders of the DCG, joined the marchers at that point, and according to the press and a later GOG bulletin, exhorted the marchers to turn north toward the Central Park, in violation of a specific Government ban. One labor leader who participated in the march, [redacted] asserted that he and his colleagues had identified the provocateurs as university elements associated with the FAR and the extreme leftist MIR. [redacted] asserted to us that the provocateurs were made up of Christian Democrats and supporters of Colonel Peralta, and that no FURD members were included.

A few marchers did respond to the call to depart from the authorized parade route, and the police riot squad repulsed them with a large amount of tear gas. The riot squad then pursued the retreating marchers southward along 6th Avenue, where a battle erupted between uniformed police and marchers hurling rocks. In this area shots were fired and several marchers fell dead or wounded. Another volley of bullets was fired a few minutes later at the Plaza Italia, in front of the Municipality, where about 3,000 marchers had regrouped to hear speeches by trade union and Opposition leaders.

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Among the wounded was Julio Celso de Leon Flores, CNT leader and Christian Democratic Deputy, who was standing on the speakers platform at the time. The CNCS stated in a press release on May 3 that the toll of the May Day violence had been three dead and at least 18 wounded. De Leon Flores recovered after several days in the hospital but remains in weakened condition.

The question of who authored the May 1 violence became the subject of bitter accusations and counter-accusations between the Government and the Opposition. The GOG alleged that the Opposition leaders had sent "assault groups" into the parade to shoot at marchers, create disorders, and carry Guatemala into a new period of violence and terrorism. DCG secretary-general Danilo Barillas threatened that the Minister of Government would be "dragged into court" as the man responsible for the deaths of "the martyrs of May 1." De Leon Flores intimated that the police had been involved in the shooting by noting that the Riot Squad had intruded into the authorized parade route, "as shown by the places where the deaths and woundings occurred." Some eyewitnesses claimed the shots were fired by both uniformed and plainclothes police. This assumption was made on the basis of their operating from unmarked radio cars. One witness, [REDACTED] told us he had seen police fire in the Plaza Italia at the moment in which de Leon Flores was wounded and another man fell dead. Other unconfirmed reports, including from nonparticipating security officials, claimed the May Day melee was provoked by random firearm shots from disguised and fleeting infiltrators of the Government Coalition, namely the MLN, assisted by irregular elements of the Police Department.

III. Attacks Against Christian Democrats: During the night of May 8 fragmentation grenades and incendiary bombs exploded at the DCG Party headquarters in Guatemala City and at the homes of DCG national leader René de Leon Schlotter and party secretary-general Danilo Barillas. All three locations were occupied at the time, but no one was injured and property damage was moderate. De Leon and Barillas attributed the attacks to the Escuadron de la Muerte, which allegedly had circulated a leaflet two days before threatening "elimination" of the DCG leaders and their families unless the leaders left the country within 48 hours.

On May 31 the DCG secretary-general for Alta Verapaz, Enrique Ramirez Hernandez, was kidnapped in Cobán and his tortured, and bullet-riddled body was found a few kilometers away the next day.

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IV. Unexplained Incidents: Werner Trejo Alvarez, 23, a crime reporter for La Noche and son of a radio news service director, was kidnapped in the capital while driving to work on May 15. The National Press Circle (CNP), a minor journalists' association, claimed in a letter to the Minister of Government that unidentified sources had informed them that Trejo's name headed a "blacklist" of journalists prepared by the Detective Corps. The GOG denied that such a list existed or that Trejo had been arrested. The missing journalist's father was permitted to discuss the case with the Minister of Government and President Arana ordered that a large-scale search be conducted, but so far no trace of Werner has been reported. The Guatemalan Journalists' Association (APG) on May 30 sent a message to the Human Rights Commission of the U.N. requesting intervention in the cases of Trejo and Herbert MacDonald, a prominent journalist's son who was kidnapped in April.

On May 9, Miguel Calderón Garcia, 60, a recently retired chief of the Treasury Police in Guatemala Department, was shot to death in the capital by unknown assailants. Calderón's wife told reporters she believed the murder was related to her husband's dismissal of several high-ranking Treasury police officers whom he had discovered stealing thousands of dollars by inflating payrolls with false names. Mrs. Calderón's comments obliged the National Director of the Treasury Police to publicly state that no such fraud had ever existed in his organization. This apparently non-political incident was not included in our monthly total.

V. Latest Death Squad Action: Also excluded from the May incident total was the monthly toll of Escuadron de la Muerte executions of supposed common criminals. The bodies of two more Escuadron victims were found in separate areas of Suchitepéquez on May 21, both shot, tortured and with notes tied around their necks reading, "For Robbery, The Death Squad." These two slayings brought to about 26 the clandestine group's toll since early February.

MELOY

file

CLASSIFIED BY Francis E. Meloy, Jr.
EXEMPT FROM GDS OF EO 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B (2)

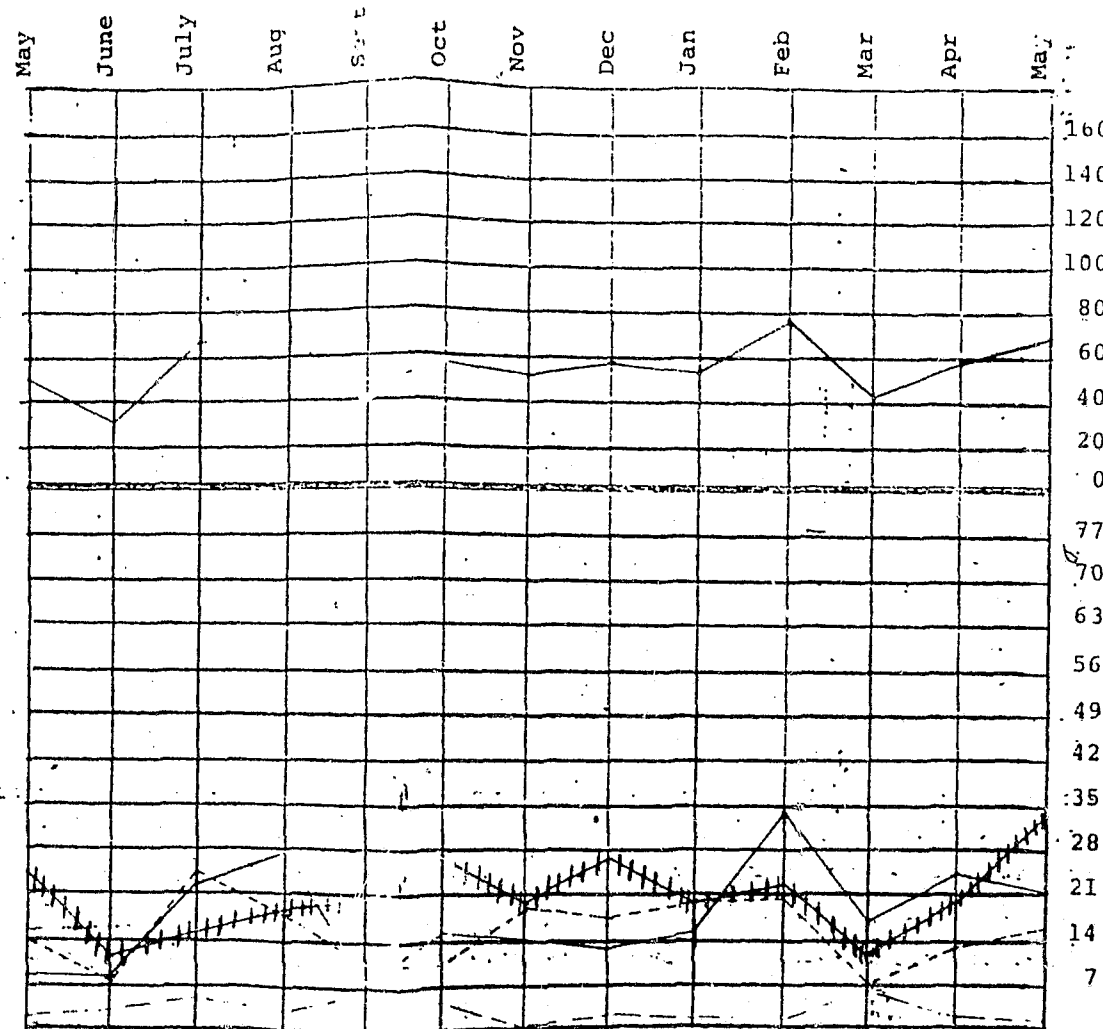
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MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL INCIDENTS BY REGION - MAY 1973 - MAY 1974

Enclosure

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TOTAL 71

For purposes of this graph, acts of violence include shootings, bombings, and politically motivated.

Capital area - Sacatepequez, Guatemala
 South Coast - San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepeque
 Eastern Region - Jutiapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Iza
 Highlands - Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja

11 of which appear to be

Rosa

sa-Verapaz, Sozola